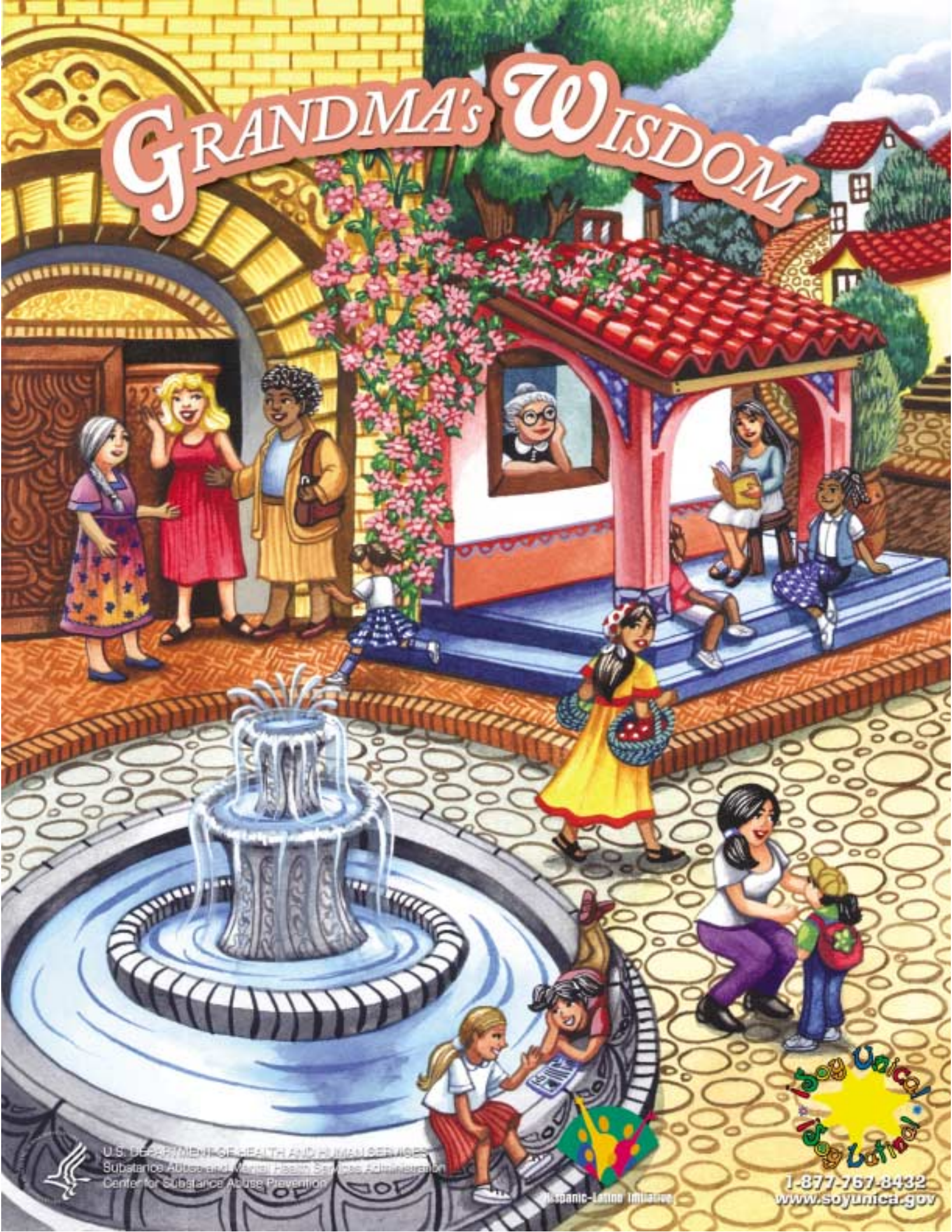


GRANDMA'S WISDOM



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

Hispanic-Latino Initiative



1-877-767-8432
www.soyunica.gov

Foreword

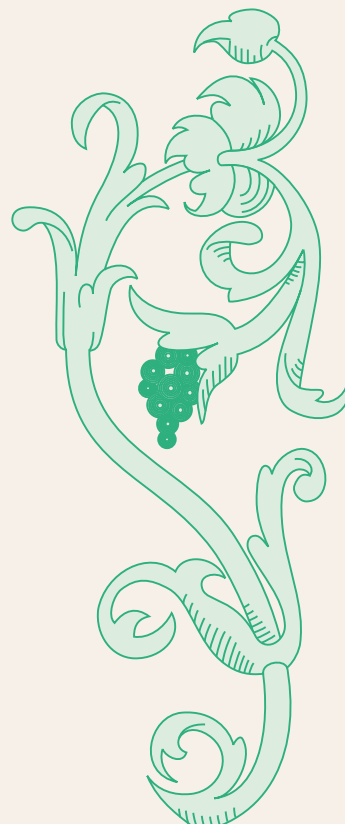
This booklet, “Grandma’s Wisdom,” is designed to build on our traditional Hispanic/Latino values, and at the same time, enrich the values we adopt living in the United States. It provides tips that we, as Latina mothers, need to help our daughters improve their self-esteem and lead satisfying, successful lives.

We know that parents, grandparents and other caring adults can play a major role in helping young people avoid the dangers of substance abuse. The key is to talk to our daughters— often and early and to send clear and consistent messages that we don’t want them using alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. The fact is, most parents have an incredible influence on their children. This guide can help you make the most of that influence. We have divided this booklet into seven sections:

- A Look at Yourself (Self-Esteem)
- No One Is Perfect (Guilt)
- Oh, My Darling, We Do Explode... (Anger)
- Stop! Enough! (Stress)
- When Sadness Goes Too Far... (Depression)
- Life Is Beautiful; You’ll See (Suicide)
- From Silence... To Dialogue (Sexuality)

I would like to thank all the people who helped create “Grandma’s Wisdom.” We hope you will use this information to help the young Latinas in your life and share it with others.

Ruth Sánchez-Way, PhD, Director
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Notes

Grandma's Wisdom

For more information:

1-877-767-8432
(Toll-free number)

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My Dear Granddaughter:

How quickly time passes! It seems like only yesterday when I was singing you lullabies to help you get to sleep. I still remember how you would look for me, eager for me to read or tell you fairytales.

Today you are a grown woman with your own home. You are now a mother and know the immense love one feels for our children. It is sheer joy.

I know, too, that sometimes you will worry about their future, their education, and their well-being. Don't worry so much; life offers us great opportunities.

All of these things have led me to reflect on my own life, on what I have learned, and on my experiences. I realize that to make our dreams come true we need courage, perseverance, and optimism. My fifth grade teacher was a wonderful person who instilled in us the idea that we should get into the habit of thinking positively: "the more you practice it, the faster you learn."

I confess to you that I have had both good and bad experiences, yet I always tried —as Miss Anita would recommend— seeing the positive side of sad situations, and it worked for me.

continued....



I have many stories to tell you, so I decided to write "Grandma's Wisdom." I would like to leave these tips and stories as my legacy for you, to be passed on to your daughter, and to all our family. I would like these memories of all these years to be passed on from one generation to the next, so they can learn what happened in my life and the lessons I learned from it. I hope this becomes a family tradition.

I know that one of the most difficult tasks in life is being a mother, especially for us, since we are influenced by two cultures and we must adapt to both.

I think you know by now that there are no specific recipes for being a good mother. I recommend that you mix spoonfuls of good, sincere intentions, with several cups of understanding, dedication, and sacrifice, and pounds of love, all of which will make your job much easier.

My dear granddaughter, there isn't a course in school which teaches us how to be mothers. It is something we learn intuitively. That is why I hope these tips that I am giving you with all my love, will guide and brighten your path through motherhood.

I love you very much,
Your *Abuelita*



A Look at Yourself (Self-Esteem)





Delightful Awakening

Facing Life with Optimism

There will be times in your life when you feel beautiful, worthy, and sure of yourself. But there will also be times when you feel that it has all come crashing down. In this way you realize that your moods are not, and will not always be the same.

Your self-esteem regulates all these changes; that is, how you feel, how you value yourself, and what you think about yourself. It has to do with your successes and your failures, with your feelings, with your mental health, and with your relationships with your family and friends. As you can see, self-esteem is very important.

That's why when your self-esteem is high, you feel important, happy, and radiant, and everything turns out well for you. On the other hand, when your self-esteem is low, you don't feel good and don't have confidence in yourself. Everything seems bad and you feel you have no strength to continue.

There are simple but very effective techniques to regain a positive state of mind. Remember that if you look at life with optimism and joy, you will radiate this positive force and be happy. At the same time, your family and friends will appreciate being with you and feel happy.

Forgotten Songs

Remembering the Good Things in Life

It is easier to give advice than to put it into practice. Changing your attitude toward certain situations takes a lot of time, especially when your self-esteem is low.

When you decide to change your behavior, you should go forward enthusiastically and persistently, and with determination and dedication. Then, and only then, will you get good results.

In order to achieve high self-esteem, you must learn to recognize your strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes it's hard work to look at ourselves and appreciate who we are and what we have achieved. So, begin by looking inside yourself and writing down in your diary the things you admire most about yourself.

Have you realized:

How worthy you are?

How successful you were in managing two cultures and perhaps speaking two languages?

How much effort you put into working every day, raising your children, and struggling for your family?

What your strengths are? How strong your spirit is?

I want you to know, that after practicing these exercises you will feel much better. Always remember how many good things have happened in your life, and how much love you have given your children and family. Believe me, these exercises will help you love and admire yourself.





Enchanted Gardens

Cultivating Happiness

Through the years I have learned that as long as you have a sincere and genuine attitude, it will be easier to solve your conflicts. It is essential to maintain a sense of inner happiness and peace.

It always helped me to go out in the garden to tend to my roses. Do you remember when I taught you how to graft two roses of different colors in a single rose? We were so proud of ourselves that we invited the whole neighborhood to see our experiment. That raised our self-esteem sky high.

So, if you manage to keep your self-esteem high, you will be able to solve problems easily. Most importantly, you will feel better about yourself, your family, and others.

Therefore, based on my experience, I recommend that you:

- Love yourself
- Appreciate your strengths
- Be confident of your abilities
- Think positively
- Acquire more knowledge
- Be good to yourself



No One I s Perfect (Guilt)





Well-Traveled Paths

Expressing Yourself Firmly and Tenderly

We know that no one is perfect in this world. So, when things don't work out as perfectly as you would have hoped, don't give up. Learn from your mistakes how to do better next time.

In the same way we look at our actions, we should convince ourselves that we are not responsible for what other people do. When we have doubts about a certain outcome, or feel guilty about having caused a conflict, the healthiest thing to do is to always try to express our frustrations and fears carefully. I recommend you do this in a civilized way that is respectful of others.

When we feel guilty, we generally blame and accuse others. We often feel ashamed, which leads us to punish ourselves and others. I am sure you will face situations that will make you feel responsible for everything that is happening around you. Other times you will be afraid to face your mistakes.

You should know that I have found myself in this predicament many times. I have felt overwhelmed by fear and totally confused but, as the saying goes, there is always a rainbow after the storm. And it's true, because as soon as I got over my anger, I would start to express my feelings more clearly and honestly.



Keep in mind that both anger and sadness are normal, natural emotions. We must learn how to manage them so they don't make us sick. A bad attitude and resentment get us nowhere.

Life has taught me that we can solve huge problems when we are willing to forgive. This reminds me of my grandmother's saying:

"Sweetheart, swallow your pride; it's not fattening."

You need to express your feelings and learn to forgive yourself. When you make a mistake, admit it and ask for forgiveness. And don't be so critical of yourself. Above all, be kind to yourself and you will feel relieved and happy once again.





Whispers from Your Conscience

Admitting Mistakes

When you offend someone, always seek forgiveness. Never think it will hurt you; on the contrary, you will feel better. We must take responsibility for teaching our children with positive examples.

I don't recommend imposing your ideas on your children. The only way they assimilate your ideas is by example. When they hear you say, "I'm sorry from the bottom of my heart," then they learn to forgive. It is important that you set this example for your children. They will respect you more for it, because you are showing them how strong and honest you are.

If it is hard for you to forgive yourself, or you don't know how to carry out this task, try to do what I used to do. I would find a free moment—as if we mothers can spare one—and I would make a list of all my mistakes. At first, it was hard, because I had to start with the one that was the most difficult for me to admit. And, do you know which one it was? I think you have already guessed. I was very stubborn and I would never follow any advice. How things change! Now I am the one giving it.

My dear, I can guarantee you this exercise is foolproof. When you finish the list, review it several times and forgive yourself once and for all.

As far as the famous little list goes, you don't have to keep it or show it to anyone. So, after the exercise, tear it up.

*Oh, My Darling,
We Do Explode...
(Anger)*





Showers of Memories

Moderating Your Reactions

I imagine that more than once, you have felt so frustrated that you had a tremendous urge to scream. Just like other times, you have been so angry and upset inside, that you felt like a volcano about to erupt. We all feel this way at times. It's normal, so don't be alarmed.

I remember the day that my brother Fernando was getting married. I was just 16 years old and I was so happy, because I was going to wear a beautiful blue dress my mother had made for me. A month ahead of time we took my shoes in to be dyed to match. I was going to be a hit at the party; I was sure everyone would admire me. Well, the shoestore called a few days before the wedding to say they would not be able to have them ready by that Saturday. My cousin Nibaldo took the message but he forgot to tell me. When I heard the bad news I thought I would die of rage; I cried for hours out of desperation.

Of course not having those shoes wasn't the end of the world. Thank goodness my mother solved the problem by dyeing them herself. But I was still terribly angry. My brother and my cousin thought that I had blown the incident out of proportion.

As you see, anger is a very strong emotion, especially when something we really want doesn't work out. What's important is to realize that you were overreacting, and to try to think about people around you and what they are going through.

I nvisible Hills

Forgiving Yourself

If you don't forgive yourself, over time your resentment will grow and take over. This is bad because you won't be able to control your behavior or the words you use. The worst part is that you will hurt yourself and the people you love the most.

Managing anger takes skill, strength, and practice. When you get angry, remember that you have a right to feel that way, but try to find out why you are really angry.

Try to get to the "heart of the matter," to be able to deal better with your pain and anger. For instance, if you find yourself frustrated with the twenty people ahead of you in line at the supermarket, think...maybe the real problem is something that happened at home that morning.

Don't try to suppress your anger or pretend that you are not mad either. That is worse. I have already said that it is dangerous to deny your feelings, because if you bottle them up, you will finally "explode," hurting yourself and others as well.

You need to know your options. There aren't any magic formulas to control anger. I fell into a vicious cycle of reacting hastily when I was angry. Of course, I have come to regret the things I did.

The best way not to repeat our mistakes is to stop punishing and tormenting ourselves with "I should have..." or "If only I had..." The most important thing is to forgive yourself and in the future, resolve the problem differently.





Warm Breezes

Staying Calm

When you want to show that you are angry, don't use offensive words. You will only embarrass yourself and look bad. You must calmly indicate what you really want. I will humbly tell you what has worked for me.

By asking myself these simple questions, I have managed to acknowledge my feelings. Try to answer them and look at the things that bother you.

What makes you furious:

At yourself?

At your children?

At your partner?

At your family?

At work?

Once you understand why you are angry, go back and talk to the individual or people who made you angry and try to resolve the situation. By staying calm, you will be better able to express your feelings and the reason for your anger in a firm but civilized way, without blaming anyone or being aggressive.

Remember, like many things in life, we have to practice the way we express ourselves and control our feelings. This requires time and patience. When you succeed, you will see your relationships with your family and friends improve. We change things with affection, not anger.

Stop! Enough! *(Stress)*





Roots

Handling Situations

I think that my heart, soul, and mind will always be linked to my homeland, my culture, and my traditions. There I learned to cherish the moment and the little things. I remember those long winter nights when we sat by the fire with Mom, drinking warm milk and talking for hours.

That's why it concerns me when I hear young people complain that they are burdened by stress. Try to remember that life is a lot more complex for them now than it was for you or me.

From the moment we wake up, we encounter unpleasant situations that can make us tense and nervous. This takes its toll on our bodies and minds, building up tremendous stress.

To avoid stress I recommend that, each day, in the midst of all of your duties, you make some time for yourself: read a book, listen to music, take a bubble bath, or simply take a walk.

There are two techniques that have helped me reduce stress or emotional anxiety. When negative thoughts come to my mind, I tell myself, "ENOUGH!" and I replace them with positive ones.

You might think that I am oversimplifying, but the truth is that all thoughts take about 20 seconds to be engraved in your mind. Beat negative thoughts to the punch and get rid of them. They won't bother you again. It isn't easy, but you have to practice this regularly.



The second technique is visualization. To make the changes you want, think about pleasant situations. To do this, try to relax, breathing deeply and slowly for a few minutes. Then imagine some pleasant situations. This will relax you and help you reduce stress.

The most common signs of stress are:

- Heart palpitations
- Dry mouth or throat
- Headache
- Difficulty in speaking
- Sweaty palms, neck, or other parts of the body
- Stomach ache, diarrhea, vomiting
- Anxiety, nervousness, insomnia

If you have these symptoms, try to practice the techniques I mentioned. If you have these symptoms for an extended period of time, seek professional help.



Notes

*When Sadness Goes
Too Far...
(Depression)*





Blooming Melancholy

Getting to Know Your Spirit

When your mother was 10 years old, she still wore her beautiful black hair in braids. I knew when she was sad, because she would undo them and —without a word— she would come to me so I could braid them again. Of course she wanted to talk and she needed to be at my side. I would tell her stories, make her laugh, and we would spend some loving time together. Fixing her hair was the best therapy for her sadness.

Of course braiding hair does not solve all problems. You may encounter situations or circumstances that make you feel sad or discouraged. We should learn how to tell the difference between fleeting sadness and feeling totally empty. When emptiness and loneliness drag us down for too many days, and we feel like we are falling through a long, black, endless tunnel, then it is more than sadness. You may be depressed.

Unlike sadness or a temporary bad mood, depression is a serious medical condition. It robs you of energy, makes you feel alone, with no support or hope. Further, it leads you to think and feel so negatively that you stop struggling.

Other symptoms of depression may be: changes in your eating habits, weight gain or loss, lowered self-esteem, unrealistic feelings of guilt, difficulty in concentrating, and even thoughts of suicide.

As you see, depression is a serious matter. Don't wait for simple sadness or the blues to get you so down. Remember that there are many people around who love you and would be glad to help.

Blue Moon

Taking Care of Your Emotional Health

To avoid falling into a depressive state, follow these recommendations:

Don't isolate yourself; talk to someone you trust about what you are feeling. Look for support.

Don't set your goals too high, or take on too heavy a load.

Divide big jobs into small steps, set your priorities, and just do what you can, when you can.

Don't try to do too many things too quickly because that will just magnify your sense of failure.


Participate in activities that make you feel better. Exercise, go to the movies, or to social or religious gatherings.

If it takes a while for you to get your spirits up, don't lose patience. Sometimes it takes time to feel good again.

If you are suffering from depression, do not be ashamed; seek help as soon as possible. There are mental health professionals who can help you.

It is very important that you take care of ***your*** emotional well-being so that you can take good care of your family, achieve your goals, and be successful in life.





The first step towards seeking a solution is learning to identify and recognize your feelings. The best way to identify them is to ask yourself the following questions:

Do you feel sad most of the day?

Do you feel overloaded with things to do and negative thoughts?

Have you lost your enthusiasm?

Do you feel alone?

Are you tired all the time, without energy?

Do you need to sleep more than usual?

Do you have trouble sleeping at night?

Is your appetite irregular? Sometimes you're very hungry and sometimes not at all?

Do you feel that you are not getting anywhere with your work and housework?

Do you have trouble concentrating or thinking clearly?

Have you lost the ability to enjoy life?

Do you just want to be alone and not see anyone?

Do you cry at anything, or are you constantly irritated or angry?

Do you have a pessimistic attitude toward life, with little hope for the future?

Do you smoke a lot?

Do you tend to drink a lot?

Do you mix medicines with beer or wine?

If you answer yes to some of these questions, we recommend you seek professional help.

**Don't hesitate for a second to seek help.
It will be the best decision you make in your life.**

*Life is Beautiful; You'll See...
(Suicide)*





Morning Songs

Seeking Emotional Support

I remember when every Sunday you would ask me to make pancakes. You liked them golden, not burnt, with syrup. While I prepared the mix, you would carefully watch what I was doing, so as not to miss a thing. One time you looked at me curiously and asked: “Grandma, how many times do you have to move the pan around so the pancakes come out OK?” Well...we laughed so hard, because I was turning the pan to tighten the handle that had come loose.

We are blessed with healthy emotions like love, hope, joy, and good humor. They are all contagious and we must use them often as antidotes for a sad, gloomy day—like memories of making pancakes.

Unfortunately, even today, some people believe that the emotional problems that cause depression are not real, that it’s all in the person’s head, and that they just need to get over it.

Most people who suffer from depression are afraid of being perceived as “a weak person who lacks character and willpower.” Those who suffer severe depression and don’t seek medical help may end up taking their own lives.

Hopefully, you’ll never become depressed. I have tried to understand this illness since the day my Aunt Mary had that terrible accident and broke her leg. Although she received the best treatment and was lovingly cared for at home, she fell into a deep depression.

Can you believe it? She tried nine different types of treatment and finally, after so much suffering, one worked. But she told us, many times, that she did not want to go on living.

WARNING:

Weeping Willow

Losing Hope

There are various myths about suicide that I would like to explain in order to put an end to them. The lives of some of our loved ones may depend on this.

Myth – People who express a desire to commit suicide rarely do so.

Reality – In general, people who express that desire are giving a clear indication or warning that their intentions are real.

Myth – Despite treatment, people who are inclined toward suicide never get better.

Reality – People who are inclined to commit suicide have contradictory thoughts about death. That is why treatment works well in most cases.


Myth – In cases of suicide or suicide attempts, alcohol or drug abuse is a minor cause.

Reality – Persons who commit suicide, or attempt it, frequently act under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Myth – People who have attempted suicide because they are unable to deal with a painful tragedy in their lives will continue to attempt suicide, even though they later overcome their pain.

Reality – People who in a moment of weakness and tragedy have attempted suicide do manage to get better with treatment and support.





Myth – If people express a desire to commit suicide, you should never talk to them about their intentions.

Reality – You SHOULD ask people who express the desire to commit suicide about their intentions. Talking relieves their anxiety and may help stop them from following through.

Myth – Rich people commit suicide more than poor people.

Reality – The proportion of suicides is the same between rich and poor people.

Myth – People who attempt suicide do so to get the attention of those around them.

Reality – People who attempt suicide feel a real desire to die. Therefore they should be offered support and professional help immediately.

Myth – People who have attempted suicide during a crisis and undergone treatment are “cured.” They are no longer at risk.

Reality – People who “improve” after a crisis still have to confront their problems and responsibilities, which could lead them to a new desire to commit suicide. For this reason, they should continue receiving professional help until they have regained total control of their lives.

Lifeline

Identifying Signals

Although it's hard to believe, young people can also wish to die. It is important to observe your children and know how to recognize their degrees of sadness. Therefore, if you notice any sudden changes in your child, such as any of the warning signals listed below, you have to seek professional help quickly. As usual, here I go again with another one of my very important lists.

Listen to your children attentively and watch for the following signs:

- When they directly or indirectly threaten to kill themselves;
- When they seem obsessed with death;
- When they write poems, essays, or make drawings with death as a theme;
- When they have abrupt personality changes, fail to take care of their appearance, don't comb their hair, take a bath, or wear clean clothes.
- When they are very irritable and acting abnormally;
- When they say they feel useless, ashamed, or guilty, for no reason;
- When they change their eating or sleeping habits;
- When their grades and behavior in school fall off.





Sunset

Talking with Your Children

I think I have a more practical, rather than scientific, way of solving things. And I admit that many of my conclusions are based on what my heart tells me. So, I recommend that you, too, trust your intuition.

If you think the situation is serious, get help immediately: contact a counselor, nurse, doctor, or mental health specialist. Help your children, listen to them, and tell them you love them.

Help them express their feelings and don't be afraid to ask if they have thought about suicide. Remember that it is not good to avoid that question.

Don't feel guilty if your children say they have thought about killing themselves. Don't think that this is because of something you have or haven't done.

To help your child save his or her life, warn other loved ones about what is happening. Advise his or her counselor, teacher at school, and friends as well. That way, everyone can help.

Above all, seek professional help! You must be strong and not keep this a secret.

From Silence... To Dialogue (Sexuality)





Rosebuds

Moving Toward Adolescence

I am almost finished with this diary and I am sure you won't mind if I talk to you about sexuality. I don't want to leave out this important subject that has always been surrounded with myths and taboos. Inaccurate information causes a lot of harm.

For generations we Latina women have been afraid and have "kept quiet" about this very important and natural topic.

I have to tell you that my mother and I were never able to discuss this subject. When I first started to menstruate, I had no idea what was happening to me. Alarmed, I came screaming out of the bathroom and called my mother. She blushed and said to me: "It's nothing, you'll have it every month. Wear this."

I started crying and told her that maybe I had some illness and was going to bleed to death. She told me not to worry and left me alone. For many days I felt confused and scared. I did not calm down until my cousin Norma came over and explained everything to me.

Sexuality is much more than what you do with another person. It's the way you feel as a woman: the way you act, dress, move, speak, and how you feel about yourself and other people.

Sweet Lilies

Teach Them to be Aware of Their Bodies

You must have noticed that we women think and feel emotions differently than men. Every woman develops her own sexuality according to her own values, the values of her family, spiritual values, and her personality.

Even though I know that you are a woman who is sure of herself and who considers herself “modern,” I imagine that just thinking of talking with your daughter about sexuality makes you uneasy.

Do you feel uncomfortable talking with your daughter about “the facts of life?” Don’t worry; you are not alone. A lot of mothers feel scared or ashamed of the idea of talking about “this.”

Once you have decided to talk with your daughter about sexuality, look at yourself first, that is, do a self-evaluation. This is necessary because what you think about your own sexuality will be reflected in what you teach her. A good way to start is, well, you guessed it, ask yourself these questions from another one of my famous lists:

How do I feel about my own sexuality?

Do I have any fears about it?

What makes me feel comfortable or uncomfortable?

What family values around sexuality do I want to pass on to my daughter?

That is why it is so important for couples with children to accept themselves as sexual beings to feel comfortable with their bodies, the way they look, and show affection.





Restless Souls

Mother and Daughter Talking About Intimacy

I imagine that right about now you must be concerned with how to respond to your daughter's questions about sexuality.

It is important to understand that your daughter, now that she is older, is curious about different things than when she was small.

Probably, now she is the one who feels a little embarrassed about asking you certain questions. That is why you must get close to her and try, little by little, to gain her confidence so she feels free to ask you questions.

For example, she may want to ask you why her body is changing, why she feels butterflies in her stomach when she gets near her boyfriend in school, what AIDS is, or what a condom is.

Don't be surprised by your daughter's questions or think that she is too young to know certain things or that she has any bad intentions.

All the questions I have just given you as examples are normal for her age. It is a stage of physical development and exploration, and her curiosity is natural.



Poetic Harmony

Teaching with Love

Talk to her in a straight-forward way, using simple words. Be direct and call everything by its name, without beating around the bush or going to extremes. Sometimes you might feel anxious or embarrassed by some of her questions and want to change the subject. Never do that, because it will only confuse her.

Show an interest in whatever she tells you. It is especially important not to judge her, laugh at her, or be sarcastic. Find the time necessary to talk with her when she asks. If there is some reason you can't talk right away, and you promise to do it later, never break your promise.

Above all, convince yourself that you are capable of talking about sexuality with your youngster. This way you will be creating the atmosphere of love and confidence that she needs in order to learn to experience a healthy, pleasing, and responsible sexuality.





Tender Dialogues

Help Her Protect Herself

The first thing you have to keep in mind is that your daughter is in full puberty. Her body and her mind are undergoing changes. The speed of these changes sometimes makes her anxious and confused. She sees the world in a new way, and her reactions are different from one day to the next.

There are lots of subjects you can discuss with your children about sexuality. I would love to be able to point them all out to you and advise you about them, but then I would never finish writing this diary.

Talk to her in a natural tone, using appropriate words. She should learn the correct names of every part of her body. Let her know that it is normal for hips to widen, breasts to enlarge, and hair to grow on her armpits and pubic area.

Tell her ahead of time that she will soon begin to notice a secretion in her vagina, and that she will have her first period soon. Remember the experience of your own first menstruation and think about how you would want it to be for your daughter. Prepare her by explaining what menstruation is and what she should do, so that, unlike me, she will not be scared or surprised when it happens.

Now I must tell you some things about emotional changes. Adolescents always want to be adults, make their own decisions, and be independent. That is why you should always maintain good communication with your daughter and gain her confidence.

That will allow you to help her and advise her when she tells you about her troubles and her joys, about her first love, the things that happen to her, and what she worries about.

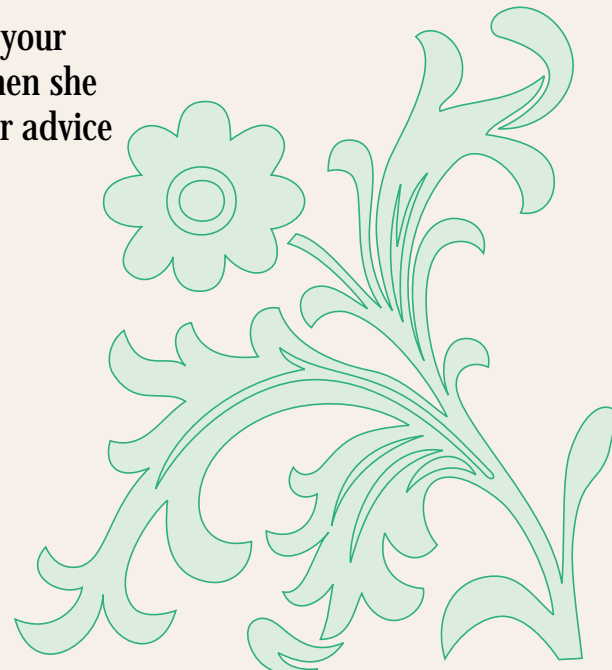
Since I have mentioned love, I must tell you that it is a matter of great importance for adolescents, and that it requires their parents' understanding.


Along with the awakening of tender loving emotions, there is a surge in erotic sensations. Now you must reinforce the values you have been instilling in your daughter since childhood. Speak to her openly about what you think about sexual relationships. It is important for you to share your family values with her.

Make her understand the risks she runs if she decides to have sexual relations, and the consequences as well. Explain the responsibility that such a decision involves for her. At the same time, it is important for you to advise her not to have sexual relations yet. She should wait until later, when she is more mature.

Some mothers think that telling their daughters that they ought to avoid sexual relations during adolescence means "being old fashioned" or "losing their friendship." My dear granddaughter, remember that your major responsibility is that of being a mother. Throughout her life, your daughter will have plenty of friends.

Although sometimes it doesn't seem like it, she needs your advice, guidance, and your firm values. That way, when she faces that situation, her decisions will be based on your advice and teachings.





You have to let her know the risks and consequences of irresponsible and unprotected sexual activity. For example, here is another list:

- The damage she will do to herself if she decides to have sexual relations merely because of giving in to pressure from her friends or boyfriend.
- The dangers and consequences to her physical and mental health if she becomes pregnant when she is too young and immature to care for a baby.
- The risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases: HIV/AIDS and herpes, among others.
- The danger of drinking alcohol or using drugs. These can cloud our judgment and put us at risk for rape.

Furthermore, teach her that she can show her boyfriend she loves him without indulging in sexual relations. For example, by showing him that she accepts him the way he is and that she respects his ideas and opinions.



Dear granddaughter, when you advise and teach your daughter you are warning her about and protecting her from the many dangers that surround her. Stay close to her, watch over her, and talk to her with confidence and love.

Always remember that sexually educating your daughter prepares her for Life and Love, so that she can realize her dreams, so that she can have hope for her future.

My dearest granddaughter, remember that I wrote this diary with an enormous amount of love and with the hope that it becomes part of your life.

I want it to be the light that guides you in the difficult but lovely task of BEING A MOTHER.

I love you, today and always,
Your *Abuelita*



Hispanic/Latino Initiative Steering Committee

On behalf of the 7 million Latina girls living in the United States and Puerto Rico, we would like to express our appreciation to the Steering Committee for their tireless guidance in the development of the first bilingual campaign that uses cultural factors to enhance the girls' self-esteem. Their efforts will foster their health and well-being for years to come.

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